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ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify the barriers that negatively impact the ability of disabled youth to successfully make a transition from school into employment and a quality adult life, and sought to specifically define organizational disincentives to successful transition. Current research is reviewed relating to organizational barriers to successful transition. A survey instrument was developed and was used to interview 125 representatives of primary youth-adult service provider agencies and interest groups, including education agencies, rehabilitation/habilitation services, Job Training Partnership Agency programs, regional centers, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, advocacy groups, and parent groups. Results indicated that barriers and disincentives to the transition process existed in the areas of: program operation/system delivery, attitudes, collaboration, funding, personnel training, and eligibility procedures. Respondents felt that the educational system possessed the greatest number of barriers to transition, followed by parents and rehabilitation services. Recommendations for change conclude the report. (JDD)

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Education Transition Center

Program, Curriculum, and Training Unit
California State Department of Education
Special Education Division
Sacramento, California

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Organizational Barriers to Transition: Summary

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ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS TO TRANSITION: SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

There is a growing consensus of evidence to support the assertion that young adults with disabilities who leave school have severe difficulties in finding employment and also experience problems in successfully adjusting to the demands of adult living. (OSERS, 1986, NASDE, 1986) There is less agreement however, on exactly why there is such a high failure rate for students who are attempting the transition process from school to work and adulthood. This study seeks to identify more clearly the nature of the barriers that confront students and the adults concerned with their well being as they progress through school and on to adult life.

Current research has also suggested that there are actual disincentives to successful transitions existing in the various groups and organizations which provide services to the individual with disabilities. It is the intent of the study to specifically define these organizational disincentives to transition. These organizational barriers to the successful transition process are the problems that we in the service provider community have a responsibility to act upon if we are to be a part of the transition "solution."

Inter-agency transition planning councils are forming across the nation and within the state of California in an attempt to plan a more efficient and effective delivery system of services to persons with disabilities. Participants in this endeavor include educators, private sector service-provider-agencies, employers, and parents. The goals of these councils include the elimination of the duplication of

services and the raising of the quality of transition services to persons with disabilities. Within this context, that of intra-inter agency collaboration, organizational disincentives or barriers become evident.

Therefore, the major purpose of this study is to identify these organizational barriers and disincentives that negatively impact the ability of disabled youth to successfully make a transition from school into employment and a quality adult life. Section One of the study reviews current research related to organizational barriers to successful transitions. Section Two describes the design of the project. Section Three describes the findings or results of the study. Section Four presents conclusions or recommendations for change suggested by the project staff, consultants and advisors who participated in the study.

SECTION ONE

REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

The Failure of Special Education Students to Adjust Successfully to Post School Life

It is generally accepted that one primary goal of education is to better prepare students to function as successful adults in post school environments (Passow, 1976). Educators would have a difficult time defending school systems where few of the graduates were able to qualify for meaningful employment or to go on for advanced preparation and training. Similarly, special education professionals want their efforts to result in enhanced life opportunities for their students.

If a primary goal of education and many other service agencies is to better prepare students to function successfully in post school environments, the available data related to our achievement of this goal is not encouraging:

- o The majority of the 300,000 disabled students who leave school each year face severe difficulties in obtaining employment. (U.S. Department of Education/OSERS, 1986)
- o High unemployment for disabled youth who have left school exists even though these students have participated in special education programs designed to meet their needs. (Hasazi, Gordon, Roe, 1985).
- o Approximately 67% of those persons who are disabled and unemployed want to work. (N.A.S.D.S.E., 1986)

- o Only one quarter of disabled citizens of work age are working full time. (N.A.S.D.S.E., 1986)
- o Approximately 75% disabled workers are employed part time and therefore unable to independently support themselves. (N.A.S.D.S.E., 1986)
- o Only a portion of the disabled eligible for adult services receive those services. Students who graduate or "age out" of public school programs have difficulty enrolling in day training or treatment programs for adults. (Halleran, Saswaert, DeStefano, 1987.)

The Federal Response to the Failure of Students to Successfully Move from School to Work

Since the enactment of PL 94-142 (The Education for All the Handicapped Act), in 1973 a great deal of progress has been made in providing increased educational services for disabled youth. Another major legislative initiative, PL 98-199, passed in 1985 emphasized transitional services for the 18-21 year old disabled youth population. This legislation is credited with increasing services to disabled youth by 88.3%. (U.S. Department of Education/ Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1986)

Despite this increased federal effort and a generally increasing awareness of the need to better transition special education

students to adulthood, we still have a long way to go to solve the problem. One major condition exists that complicates the issue. The number of agencies serving disabled youth and young adults is large and no one agency plays a dominant and continuing role in assuring successful transition. It is not unusual for a disabled youth to have two or more provider agencies in addition to his/her educational agency that have responsibility for his/her vocational education/training and placement. In California, the primary agencies serving older youth and young adults with handicaps are:

- o The local education agency (school) (LEA)
- o Regional Centers for the Developmentally Disabled
- o The Department of Rehabilitation (DR)
- o The Department of Rehabilitation/Habilitation Services
- o The Job Training and Partnership Agency (JTPA)

Other agencies that participate in the process of transition to varying degrees include: Mental Health, Children's Protective Services, Employment Development Department, the Department of Health and others. Additionally, there are a number of advocacy groups that may become involved with the individual with a disability and his/her family. Parents and other family members also represent a group that in most cases provide critical services to the disabled individual transitioning from school to work and adulthood.

In order to address the problem of transition, the Office of Special

Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has suggested that there are four critical components that are essential to successful student transitions. These components are:

- 1) Adequate student preparation and planning of placement
- 2) Follow-up, evaluation of process and procedures
- 3) Cooperative networks involving the referral of disabled students from school to service agencies and employment.
- 4) Formal interagency agreements establishing specific linkages. (Will, 1984) (Madelaine Will is the Assistant Secretary appointed by the President to head the OSERS agency).

According to Dr. Thomas Bellamy, a high ranking special education administrator in OSERS, it is first necessary to identify the specific disincentives within organizations serving the handicapped that restrict efforts to achieve the coordinated services implied by the critical components identified by Ms. Will and others. (Bellamy, Rhodes, 1982)

Subsequent research and professional commentary supports the contention of Bellamy that progress toward the goal of employment for all disabled young adults will occur only if the specific disincentives or barriers to the transition process are identified and eliminated so that a collaborative effort by educators, parents, and adult service providers can be successfully undertaken. (Fredericks, 1986; Halloran et al., 1986; McDonnell, Wilcox, and Roles,

1986; Passanella, 1986; Wehman, 1983; Will 1986.)

Defining Barriers and Disincentives to the Transition Process

As the critical components of successful transition programs have become more clearly defined by OSERS and others, research efforts have begun to concentrate on identifying where specific breakdowns occur in attempts to operationalize these components in systems serving individuals with disabilities. Mithaug, Horiuchi, and Fanning in their statewide (Colorado) follow-up of special education students (1984) found that there were specific organizational disincentives or barriers that adversely affect the establishment of inter-agency cooperative networks and make the establishment of successful linkages difficult. These agency disincentives include:

- o Administrative barriers
- o Territoriality or "turfdom" issues
- o A lack of formal agreements between agencies
- o Philosophical differences between agencies and agency representatives
- o A lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities
- o Different, sometimes conflicting terminology, definitions
- o Different methods of data collection and evaluation procedures
- o A lack of interchange of information between schools and youth-adult agencies

- o A lack of follow-up information for purposes of program evaluation

The Rehabilitation, Research and Training Center in Richmond, Virginia found additional disincentives or barriers particularly related to educational agencies that inhibit effective student transitions:

- o A lack of community based secondary programming
- o Student and family fear of the loss of federal assistance (supplemental security income, health insurance coverage, etc. because of employment that may not be permanent
- o Poor or fewer adaptive behavior skills in moderate to severe students - stemming from a lack of interactions with non-disabled peers
- o A lack of funding for agencies to provide necessary personnel for community based training and follow along support to assure an individual's successful holding of a job
- o A lack of new program development efforts to meet newly identified needs
- o Employer liability concerns
- o Inadequate transportation resources
- o A lack of qualified staff adequately trained to work with the disabled
- o Time limited services

- o Limiting attitudes regarding a disabled person's potential in the work place

In a related study conducted in California, the Medical Standards Project (M.S.P. San Francisco, 1984) studied employer personnel policies that tend to screen out disabled youth/adults and therefore serve as organizational disincentives to employment. Specific employer concerns relate to the following questions:

Does the employer's cost of liability insurance increase if disabled workers are hired?

Will the cost of liability go up when hiring the disabled?

Can disabled people ever get health and accident insurance?

Will disabled workers cause an employer's group health insurance rates to go up?

Will hiring the disabled increase retirement costs?

M.S.P. concluded that the actual risks employers take are very minimal, much less than perceived by employers. Policies that promote the hiring of disabled workers do not require that unacceptable risks be undertaken, but rather that minimal risk be tolerated.

In March of 1987, another California group of state experts in career-vocational preparation for disabled and disadvantaged youth listed the areas that are generally perceived by vocational educators as barriers to transition. These include:

- o Basic skill deficits in students with disabilities

- o Inadequate state and local planning to coordinate and consolidate services
- o Educator and agency personnel resistance to change
- o Confusion about who is eligible for services from which agency or program
- o A lack of inter-intra departmental staff development
- o Insufficient models to replicate preferred practices
- o A lack of alternative services for students who do not plan or are unable to graduate from high school (Appolloni, 1987)

Current available research indicates that specific and substantial barriers and organizational disincentives do exist that inhibit the ability of schools and other service providers to effectively transition students from school to employment and adult living. The remainder of this report will be devoted to the further identification of these barriers and disincentives existing within our service systems in California, and to making recommendations for change on the basis of this analysis.

SECTION TWO

THE PROJECT DESIGN

Project Goals

The goals of the project are:

- 1) To identify organizational disincentives and barriers that negatively impact the ability of education, youth-adult service provider, agencies and other groups within the state of California to prepare students with disabilities for work and adult life.
- 2) To conduct the study utilizing a collaborative process that draws upon a combination of authorities concerned with transition in the state of California.
- 3) To make recommendations for change based on the identification of the barriers and disincentives.

The Research Process

In order to achieve the stated project goals, a research process was undertaken that focused on developing an interview survey instrument; validating that instrument using professional advisors; and subsequently interviewing a computer selected sampling of professionals from seven agencies and interest groups.

The Collaborative Process

This project deals with the specifics of inter-agency collaboration. The research process, then, utilized the

collaborative process to the greatest extent possible in generating, analyzing, synthesizing data, and in the developing of project recommendations.

The Development of the Survey Instrument

A national search for an existing survey instrument was conducted by the research staff which included- in addition to project staff- Dr. Robert Gaylord Ross of San Francisco State, Dr. Frank Rusch from the University of Illinois, and Dr. Bob Stodden from the University of Hawaii, who served as consultants on the project. No existing survey instrument was found.

An interview-survey instrument was developed according to the following criteria:

- 1) It would have to enable rapid collection of data. (There was only six months (May - October, 1986) total time available to work on the project.
- 2) It would have to allow for a wide variance in sophistication of responses regarding transition issues and topics such as inter-agency collaboration.
- 3) It would have to work for a variety of agencies, roles, and professional disciplines.

In order to meet these criteria, an interview survey format was developed which allowed for both structured/prompted responses and

open ended questioning leading to the identification of the disincentives and barriers. An interview "script" was developed to be used by project staff conducting telephone interviews.

The interview-survey instrument was then field tested and validated throughout the state using twenty-three advisors and the members of the Interagency Council on Education and Employment (ICEE), who also served as the project advisory committee. State advisors who participated in the field test received a packet of materials which included: letters of introduction to the project written by project staff and California State Department personnel; an Education Transition Center (ETC) Newsletter; a glossary of terms; and interview-survey evaluation sheets.

The average time of field test interviews was two and one-quarter hours. No significant changes in the instrument were recommended as a result of the interviews, but several suggestions were made for additions to the "Glossary of Terms." The format, terminology and content of the draft interview-survey was approved for use by the statewide advisors in their individual evaluations.

Selection of the Interview-survey Sample

Seven primary youth-adult service provider agencies and interest groups (Education, Rehabilitation/Habilitation Services, Job Training Partnership Agency (JTPA), Regional Centers, Rehabilitation, Advocacy groups, and parent groups) were identified for participation in the study. Computerized listings of local, regional, and state level personnel were obtained from official state

records. One hundred and twenty five subjects were selected randomly in a computer after the total population had been adjusted to reflect appropriate representation and balance between heavily populated urban areas and more sparsely populated rural areas.

The actual number of individuals interviewed per agency or group was targeted at eighteen; six local, six regional and six state level representatives. Actual numbers selected varied slightly from the original figure of 18 per agency. Because of the large number of local education agencies, a larger sample of educators was selected. In the case of the JTPA groups, there was not a regional component, so additional local participants were randomly selected. Other variations in the number of participants occurred because some participants were not available for interviews.

District superintendents, agency directors, advocacy directors, or parent chair-persons of the selected groups were then contacted and asked to nominate one to three individuals in their organization that had knowledge relative to the transition issue. When more than one person was recommended, one of the names was selected randomly by a computer.

The Interview Process

Subjects were contacted by telephone. The Project was explained and requests were made for their participation and a date was selected for an interview. Packets were mailed to each participant which included project information, ETC information, demographic survey sheets with a return envelope, and a glossary of terms to be used in the interview-survey. On the day of the

interview, the person was called via telephone and the survey-interview script was used to structure the data collection. The script encourages the participant to identify specific barriers to the transition process in three basic ways:

- a) Identification of general barriers to transition.
- b) Identification of barriers specific to an identifiable agency.
- c) Identification of barriers prompted by mention of one of the categories of barriers identified by the project. (examples are: Attitudes, Eligibility, Assessment)

Formulation of Recommendations for Change

The final step in the project design relied upon the construction of an executive summary of preliminary project results that was compiled following the completion of the interview-surveys. An executive summary of the findings presented in Section Three was mailed to state level project advisors and consultants and a second level of interviewing was conducted with these twenty three advisors. During the second interview-survey, advisors were asked to "agree" or "disagree" with project results and to make recommendations for change (based upon data) to be included in the final report.

SECTION THREE

SUMMARY OF THE DATA RESULTS

Criteria for Identification of a Disincentive or Barrier

Project personnel classified a problem as a barrier or disincentive to the transition process if that issue or problem was mentioned by over fifty percent of the respondents in the interview-survey.

General Categories of Barriers to Transition

Project personnel identified the following as categories of barriers and disincentives to the transition process and provided a definition of each category. The categories were chosen by the local advisory committee to the project on the basis of their previous experience in problem identification related to transition.

Barrier/Disincentive Category Definition

- A. Program Operation/System Delivery: The delivery, administration of services.
- B. Attitudes: A mental position, feeling or emotion toward a fact or statement.
- C. Collaboration: A task done jointly, co-operatively based upon shared power and authority.
- D. Funding Resources: to furnish or provide for program use.

E. Personnel Training Preparation, teaching, instruction to qualify, make prepared.

F. Eligibility: Being qualified for, entitled to services, admitted to.

Barriers/Disincentives Identified in Each General Category

Each interview-survey respondent was asked to identify barriers/disincentives specific to each of the above categories. For example, "Do you see attitude barriers or disincentives affecting transition activities?" The responses which were identified by more than 50% of the respondents are listed below in their rank order (the highest number of responses are ranked first). If two or more barriers/disincentives had the same frequency count, they are given the same rank order number.

A. Program Operation/System Delivery

- 1) Community based training, transition activities are not a program priority.
- 2) Agency personnel are overly concerned with meeting their own placement quotas.
- 3) There is a lack of agency planning.

- 3) Agency staffing patterns are inadequate based upon student or program need.
- 4) A lack of leadership exists from state authorities. (Governor, Legislature, State Departments)
- 4) Services delivery patterns are not client oriented.
- 5) Agencies provide little or no planning for changes.
- 5) Agencies have an inadequate number of staff per client due to heavy case loads.
- 5) Agency delivery of services is inconsistent with the capability of client.
- 6) Agencies provide little evaluation of their program operation's effect on the client.
- 7) Many obstacles to community based training exist such as transportation, insurance, etc.
- 7) Student training is insufficient or inadequate.
- 7) A built in conflict exists between community based training and fulfillment of academic requirements.
- 8) Current transition planning does not deal with the whole person's adult needs (work, leisure, etc.)
- 8) Agency staff are "turf" oriented.
- 9) There is not any one agency responsible for leading transition efforts.

10) Training curriculum that does exist for clients is not related to their job placement.

10) Agencies attempt to maintain the status quo.

B. Attitudes

- 1) Agency staff's negative attitude towards the disabled potential in the work place.
- 2) Parent;s overprotective attitude towards their children.
- 3) Lack of public awareness of the potential of the disabled.
- 4) (Everyone's) unrealistic expectations of disabled students.
- 5) The public's attitude towards the disabled potential in the work place.

C. Collaboration

- 1) There is little or no collaboration between agencies. (Inter-agency collaboration)
- 2) There is little or no intra-agency communication.
- 3) There is inadequate collaboration with parents.
- 3) There is little or no cross agency sharing of resources, personnel or funds.

D. Funding

- 1) Overall, there is too little funding to provide the programs, and services needed for successful transition.
- 2) Funding priorities are not based upon client need.
- 3) Federal funding cuts and the present funding formulas to the states provide agency disincentives.
- 4) There are inadequate funds available for student transportation.
- 4) There is inadequate funding available for needed new positions, such as job coaches.
- 4) Agency funding does not reinforce transition as a priority.
- 5) Current funding levels allow for services to only a fraction of the population eligible to receive services.

E. Personnel Training

- 1) Parent training and education are needed.
- 2) Agency staff receive little or no training in working with disabled students.
- 3) Little or no cross agency-education and staff training exist.

F. Eligibility

- 1) The eligibility process excludes actual populations intended to be served by the agency.
- 2) The eligibility process is prejudicial.
- 3) The eligibility process requires excessive documentation, making it overwhelming to the applicant.
- 3) Eligibility processes are not based upon student access.
- 3) Eligibility is based upon developing a label, then providing services to remove the label.
- 3) Eligibility is dependent on proving a specific disability exists.

Barriers/Disincentives Specific to Agencies or Interest Groups

Interview-survey respondents were asked to identify barriers and disincentives specific to each major agency or group that provides services to disabled youth and young adults.

The Number of Barriers/Disincentives by Individual Agencies

There is agreement in our survey respondents that nearly all agencies that offer service to youth with disabilities have some organizational disincentives or barriers to enabling effective student transition to work and adult life. Approximately two thirds of all interview-survey respondents said that all youth service provider

agencies, parents, and interest groups have significant disincentives or barriers that adversely affect the transition process.

Education possesses the greatest number of barriers/disincentives to transition, according to our respondents. The number of barriers specific to education is nearly three times as large as any other single agency.

Parents represented the next identifiable group seen as presenting the second greatest volume of hindrances to the transition process. Rehabilitation ranks third, followed by Regional Centers, JTPA, Habilitation and Advocacy groups.

A significant number of barriers was also identified for an aggregate group of agencies that included California Children's Services, the Social Security Administration, Employment Development Department, and Mental Health.

Categories of Barriers/Disincentives Common to All Agencies

The following types of barriers were felt to be in evidence in all agencies offering service, according to 50% or more of the persons who responded to the interview-survey. The barriers are listed in rank order, ie. "Number 1) collaboration" was most frequently mentioned for all agencies.

- 1) Collaboration (A task done jointly, cooperatively based upon shared power and authority)
- 2) Personnel Training (Preparation, teaching, instruction to qualify, make prepared)

- 2) Attitudes (A mental position, feeling or emotion toward a fact or statement)
- 2) Program Operation/Systems Delivery (The administration, delivery of services)
- 3) Eligibility/Access (Being qualified for, entitled to, services, programs)
- 3) Funding (Resources to furnish or provide for program use)

Categories of Barriers/Disincentives Existing in Education

The following types of barriers were noted as most significant in education by interview-survey respondents:

- 1) Personnel Training
- 2) Program Operation
- 3) Legislation
- 4) Collaboration

Interview-survey respondents felt that education had the most difficulties to overcome in the area of personnel training and program operations. Needed legislation was seen as lacking or the legislation that existed acted frequently as a disincentive. The lack of collaboration within education and between education and other agencies was identified as a major barrier.

Attitudes as the Key Barrier Identified in Parents as a Group

Interview survey respondents clearly identified program operations factors as the primary barrier posed by parents to facilitating student

transitions from school to work and adult life. The responses were:

- 1) Program Operation
- 2) Attitudes
- 3) Personnel Training
- 4) Collaboration

Categories of Barriers/Disincentives Existing Within Vocational Rehabilitation

The following types of barriers were noted by interview survey respondents as most significant within the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation:

- 1) Eligibility
- 2) Attitudes
- 3) Collaboration
- 3) Limited Services (Short term, otherwise limited support services)
- 3) Funding
- 4) Assessment (Evaluation, appraisal of strengths, abilities, skills)

Eligibility standards and procedures were seen as the most significant barriers to the transition process with Department of Rehabilitation services. Attitudinal barriers were also identified as dominant. Problems related to collaboration, limited services, and funding were tied in rank order as the next most significant barriers/disincentives within the agency followed by assessment issues.

Categories of Barriers Existing within the Job Training and Partnership Agency (J.T.P.A.)

- 1) Eligibility
- 1) Collaboration
- 2) Program Operations/Systems Delivery
- 3) Attitudes
- 3) Funding
- 3) Personnel Training

Barriers related to eligibility and collaboration were seen as equally paramount in J.T.P.A. The eligibility problems were seen as related particularly to issues of accessibility. Program operations/systems delivery barriers ranked second. Barriers or disincentives related to attitudes, funding and personnel training tied in rank order as next most significant.

Distinctions Between Local, Regional, and State Responses

There were significant differences in responses in some cases amongst local, regional, and state level persons who responded to the survey. For instance state level advocacy representatives identified a greater number of barriers in nearly all categories than did local or regional representatives of advocacy agencies. However, in education, local and regional educators identified more barriers or disincentives than their state level counterparts. Regional Center Area Board Directors, who comprised the regional data base for Regional Centers tended to report a higher number of barriers or disincentives

than their local or state level (Department of Developmental Services) counterparts. JTPA local and state level personnel showed significant differences in the number of barriers or disincentives each reported in the various categories. The Department of Rehabilitation personnel showed a greater level of agreement between levels of personnel than did those working within Habilitation Services section of DR. Parents representing state, regional and local groups showed the greatest level of agreement, though state level representatives did tend to identify more barriers and disincentives than parents representing local or regional groups.

Inter-Relationships of the Barriers and Disincentives

For the purposes of data collection, analysis and synthesis, disincentives and barriers were divided into separate categories and sub-categories as reported above. This division was useful in coding the more than 3500 responses. However, it is important to note that all the categories and sub-categories are inter-related. For instance, "Collaboration" within and between agencies cannot in practice be totally separated from "Program Operations/Delivery of Services." The collaborative agreements made between agencies or the failure to make such agreements will directly affect the quality of services delivered. A student who is inadequately trained and fails in the work place as a result will affect attitudes of other groups regarding the work potential of the disabled (parents, agency personnel, employers, the community at large). The barriers and disincentives identified in this report are

critically interrelated. A breakdown in the delivery of services within one agency makes the job of the sister agency difficult to impossible in many instances and a loss of credibility for one is often an eventual loss of credibility for other agencies as well.

Summary of Findings

Generally speaking, the findings of this report reinforce the literature and research findings reported to date. Virtually all of the barriers/disincentives noted in the national literature review shown in Section One of this report were found to be in existence in California.

There was a significant agreement found between the survey responses obtained from the project advisor transition leaders and the larger sampling of local, state and agency service providers. Personnel within agencies at various levels (local, regional and state) do not always agree on which barriers/disincentives cause them the most difficulty. Likewise, there is significant disagreement on which barriers are most acute across the different agencies. But despite these variances in emphasis, the barriers or disincentives reported are recognized by over 50% of the respondents in the interview-survey. Using the "50% criteria," the barriers and disincentives listed in the project results may be considered as real barriers to transition.

SECTION FOUR

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Project Recommendations

Project recommendations are presented according to the categories of barriers and disincentives identified in Section Three. Many recommendations do illustrate the inter-relatedness of the barriers and disincentives noted in the project results. The recommendations are a composite of recommendations received from our project consultants, state and local advisors, project staff, and from current practices drawn from the research literature. In some cases, efforts are already underway by state, regional or local agencies to implement the recommendations presented below.

The recommendations that are presented should be viewed as initial efforts to generate solutions toward the removal or reduction of the identified barriers. These alternatives are the opinions of the authors and advisors on this project and do not necessarily reflect any endorsement by the Education Transition Center or the California State Department of Education.

Recommendations for Change

Program Operation/System Delivery

The California State Legislature should encourage state education and provider agencies to take a leadership role in **identifying transition services for disabled youth** as a major state priority.

State officials should mandate **inter-agency coordinated planning**, the sharing of resources, and the efficient implementation of school to work transitional services.

State/Local Transition Planning Councils

A state level inter-agency transition planning council made up of education and agency directors, parents and advocacy representatives should be formed.

State level transition planning councils will:

- Plan a state-wide cooperative transition model.

- Develop models of collecting, analyzing and synthesizing data.

- Mandate the format of **local transition planning councils** for the purpose of coordinating local inter-agency collaboration, service delivery planning, resource sharing and to provide feedback to the state council on local program, community needs and client's needs.

- Analyze state and local programs, client and environmental data.

- Encourage consistent policy goals at all levels.

- Formulate more effective management strategies to interpret, implement, evaluate and revise policy goals and objectives.

- Determine the specific roles and responsibilities of participating youth - adult service provider agencies, including education.

- Monitor the efficiency of programs, providing "no-nonsense" program evaluation.

- Develop intervention strategies and meaningful compliance procedures.

- Provide for inservice, staff development to agencies, parents, and the community at large on California's new state-wide transition model, and the state and local transition planning team concepts, goals, activities, etc.

- Develop state level inter-agency agreements relative to state and local needs.

- Mandate local inter-agency agreements by local transition planning councils (to reflect state agreement components as well as local program needs).

Recommendations for Change

Program Operation/System Delivery - Continued

Secondary Curriculum / Student Training

The intent of secondary programs for the disabled should be reviewed regarding desired outcomes; skills taught in secondary programs (by education or agency providers) need to match the skills needed by the disabled in the community.

Secondary and post-secondary training programs should be community based to the extent possible; It should be based upon person and environmental analysis and match, with skill acquisition and training and environmental modifications where necessary.

Secondary and post-secondary training programs should emphasize social skills instruction. Social phenomenon cannot be taught in isolation but must be developed in natural contexts in association with many other factors critical for success in both school and work environments.

Secondary and post-secondary training programs should develop curriculum referenced assessment of student competencies.

Secondary training programs need to be based more upon a "transition model" than a "graduation model", with emphasis on real life, community, social, independent living and work maturity skill training.

Education, service provider agencies, parents, employers and students should be a part of local transition planning councils that guarantee that local secondary and post-secondary training programs meet local participant's needs.

Secondary curriculum evaluation should be primarily based upon follow-up of students after they exit transition training.

Program evaluation is based upon follow-up of students after they exit transition training.

Transportation

Transition programs need to more adequately address the issue of transportation for disabled youth to get to and from community work sites. Options suggested include:

Arranging car pools and ride sharing

Developing volunteer transportation units using volunteers from community service groups, etc

Contracting with public or private transportation providers

Recommendations for Change

Attitudes - Personnel Training

Note: It is believed that Attitudes and Personnel Training, ranked (overall) by participants as the 2nd and 4th most significant categories, are inter-related; recommendations for the two categories will therefore be combined.

Preservice and inservice training certification for educational, agency transition specialists and for parents should include on-going training components on:

- Potential for the disabled in the work place.

- Environmental, academic, vocational, socio-emotional assessments.

- How to develop, implement, monitor an individualized instruction training program based upon assessment data.

- How to work as a part of an inter-disciplinary transition planning team including parents (how to collaborate).

- How to develop, operationalize, evaluate, revise an individualized transition plan relevant to (client) needs.

- An overview of regular education, vocational education, special education programs, procedures, policies regarding transition for disabled youth.

- An overview of youth-adult service provider agency programs, procedures, policies regarding transition for disabled youth and adults.

- An overview of federal and state legislation as it relates to providing transition planning services for disabled youth.

- Specific cross-agency training on agency programs, goals and objectives, policies and procedures.

- Specific on-going parent training.

Recommendations for Change

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Inter-agency collaboration at the state and local levels is necessary if essential transition services are to reach the disabled in an efficient manner. Inter-agency planning councils should work together to:

Agree on common student classification criteria, labeling and counting, reporting procedures.

Agree on a common language used to describe agency goals, objectives, programs, activities that make up the service delivery system.

Agree on a common criteria for student "success".

Agree on the sharing of resources to maximize the potential for the delivery of services in an efficient manner.

Inter-agency collaboration will meet the OSERS call for agencies to collect and report valid transition/follow-up data, report on program cost effectiveness; concentrate on secondary preparation, linkages, and post secondary support; and such collaboration that addresses the range of needs of the mildly, moderate and severely disabled as well as options for service delivery components.

Intra-Agency Collaboration

Intra-agency collaboration at the state and local level is essential. Articulation within agencies/groups is recommended especially for:

Regular, Special and Vocational Education.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Habilitation (VR).

Local, regional and state levels of education and youth service provider agencies.

Intra-agency collaboration can occur through personnel development.

Recommendations for Change

Parent Collaboration

Parent education and training (see Personnel Training) and collaboration between educators, youth - adult service providers and parents is essential to bring about the best preparation for an independent and employment-outcome-oriented life for disabled youth.

Maximizing Parent Collaboration

Parents should be included on state level Transition Planning Councils.

Parents should be included on local level Transition Planning Councils.

Parents should be retained at the state level as Parent Specialists. California has taken pride in the fact that it is one of the first states to include parent specialists as part of its special education/transition state team of consultant personnel. A minimum of one Parent Specialist for each major exceptionality is recommended.

Funding for Parent Specialists should be the responsibility of the State Level Transition Planning Council; funding should be an inter-agency responsibility as parent specialists play a significant role in inter-agency collaboration.

Local Transition Planning Councils should be encouraged through financial incentives to have at least part-time parent staff to assist in planning, community training, etc..

Community Collaboration

Community based transition programs are successful to the extent they include community personnel in the transition planning, development, implementation and evaluation process. Community personnel include community service organizations, industry, public and private sector businesses and other potential employers, churches and social service organizations.

Maximizing Community Participation

Business, industry and other community representatives should be represented on state level Transition Planning Councils and on education and provider agency advisory boards.

Business, industry and other community representatives should be included on local community advisory councils, vocational advisory councils and specifically on local transition planning councils.

Such participation by community representatives insures that programs reflect the needs of the labor market, opens opportunities for pooling business and public resources and increases employer commitments to youth programs by increasing awareness of available services.

Recommendations for Change

Eligibility/Access

Current eligibility standards are based upon an exclusion model. Public and private service provider agencies and educators serving the same population have different definitions, terminology and eligibility criteria for that population. The existing system is not the result of a collaborative effort.

The following recommendations are relevant to Eligibility/Access.

State and local Transition Planning Councils should meet and agree on common definitions, terminology, information necessary, forms and their format and verification policies.

State and local Transition Planning Councils should decide upon consistent programmatic definitions of (each) program's eligibility criteria based upon the overall needs of the client and what services each agency agrees to provide.

The eligibility process should be client centered, a positive experience for the client and a reasonable one for the parents and counselors.

Eligibility process should be non-prejudicial. For example, if an agency seeks to serve high risk youth, it does not establish an eligibility process that will exclude that population by its very nature.

Transition Planning Councils should agree to limit the amount of paperwork/ documentation required for the eligibility process. Verification and paperwork for one agency should be accepted by others agencies as well for eligibility purposes. Once the client has been through screening, actual enrollment should be based upon whether there is a match between agency programs and client needs.

The eligibility process should assist clients in being placed in youth-adult service programs that meet their needs.

Recommendations for Change

Funding

Although the project sample did not feel that additional funding is the "cure" for all the problems facing transition, there was a unanimous opinion that there is a need for additional funding to support transition as a program priority. Specific areas where additional funding is recommended include:

At the local level for transition planning, data collection, local program design, implementation and evaluation. Local transition planning will bring about more efficient programming.

At the local level to lower the client - counselor or client-teacher ratio (education and provider agencies).

At the local level for improved transportation for students involved in community based training.

At the state level to re-establish personnel development to the State Department of Special Education.

At the state level to re-establish Parent Specialists.

There is agreement that the more cooperative the inter-agency efforts for transition, the less waste and duplication there will be. Such an efficiency move will save dollars although it is not certain how much. In the meantime, it takes additional funds and other incentives for educators and agency personnel to spend time creating new programs, re-training new and old staff and meeting with their agency peers for transition planning purposes.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the process of identifying barriers and disincentives to transition -- and subsequently offering alternative strategies for solutions to these barriers/disincentives -- some future research needs were identified. The four needs state below are not intended to be a comprehensive assessment of future research needs. They are rather four specific areas of needed research that emerged from the process of this particular research project.

The Accessibility of Adult Services

The accessibility of adult services for persons with disabilities has surfaced as an important issue in this research. National statistics indicate that the disabled are not able to access adult service provider agencies. More research is needed here in California to determine whether or not disabled youth in California are accessing the adult service provider agencies.

On-Going Parent Education Training

In an era where the demand for reform efforts far exceeds the available supply of funding dollars, inservice training strategies for each new generation of parents seems exorbitant. Research is needed to demonstrate cost effective training strategies that will allow the provision of on-going parent education-training.

Appropriate Curriculum

The research of this project suggested that a significant number of secondary vocational education

courses are not assisting students to find successful employment when they leave school. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which our existing vocational programs meet the employment needs of disabled youth.

Transportation Funding

There are claims that there are millions of dollars being spent on transportation. Yet reports persist that students needing transportation to community training are not receiving it. Additional research is needed to determine the costs of community based transportation and "Where is the transportation money going?"

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